

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 8769

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, PFOR, NI, PINR

SUBJ: YAR'ADUA INTERVIEW

1. SUMMARY: IN TELEVISED INTERVIEW EVENING OF JULY 29, MARKING FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF COUP THAT OUSTED GOWON, CHIEF OF STAFF SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, BRIGADIER SHEHU YAR'ADUA INDICATED FMG MIGHT HAND OVER POWER TO CIVILIANS BEFORE PROMISED DATE OF OCTOBER 1979. HE EXPLAINED REASONS FOR NOT LIFTING BAN ON POLITICAL PARTIES, SOFTENED FMG POSITION OF ARMY DEMOBILIZATION, RELUCTANTLY ADMITTED THAT ARMED FORCES CONSTITUTED MAJOR SECURITY PROBLEM, AND SPOKE ON EFFORTS TO STIFFEN LOYALTY OF ARMY. YAR'ADUA WAS VAGUE ABOUT EXTERNAL THREATS, STATING THAT THESE BEING TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT TO ENSURE NATIONAL SECURITY AND THAT FMG IS AWAKE TO DANGER OF ENTEBBE TYPE RAID. HE DECLARED NIGERIA WOULD DO "ANYTHING WITHIN OUR POWER, AND I MEAN ANYTHING UNQTE TO HELP OPPRESSED AFRICANS ANYWHERE, ESPECIALLY IN SOUTH AFRICA. END SUMMARY.

2. ASKED IF IT WERE POSSIBLE MILITARY COULD TURN OVER POWER TO CIVILIANS AHEAD OF 1979 SCHEDULE, YAR'ADUA REPLIED QTE IF THINGS MOVE AHEAD, THE POSSIBILITY IS THERE UNQTE. TO REPORTER'S QUESTION WHY BAN ON POLITICS COULD NOT BE LIFTED EARLIER, YAR'ADUA EXPLAINED THAT THIS HAD TO WAIT UNTIL CONSTITUTION RATIFIED BY CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. CONSTITUTION WOULD STIPULATE GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION POLITICAL PARTIES. ONCE IT RATIFIED AND POLITICAL PARTIES

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FORMED, FMG WOULD GIVE PARTIES FREE HAND TO GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS.

YAR'ADUA REITERATED THAT POLITICAL PARTIES AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL UNDESIRABLE AND COULD BE AVOIDED. FMG WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE AN IDEOLOGY ON PEOPLE, AWARE THAT IF GOVT GOT INVOLVED IT MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO PRESCRIBE WHAT SORT OF GOVERNMENT COMES AFTER IT. FMG WAS DETERMINED TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO ELECT EXACTLY TYPE OF GOVERNMENT THEY WANTED.

3. YAR'ADUA CITED NATIONAL AWARENESS OF NEED FOR INCREASED SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. QTE NIGERIANS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE UNQTE WERE PASSING INFORMATION QTE AFFECTING THE SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY UNQTE TO THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES. REPORTER ASKED IF IT TRUE THAT ARMED FORCES WERE BIGGER SECURITY PROBLEM THAN CIVILIANS, AND WHAT COULD BE DONE TO TIGHTEN UP THEIR DISCIPLINE TO PREVENT FURTHER COUP ATTEMPTS. YAR'ADUA ANSWERED THAT WHILE QTE APPRECIATING UNQTE THAT ARMED FORCES QTE MIGHT CONSTITUTE THE MAJOR SECURITY PROBLEM UNQTE THE ARMED FORCES DO NOT EXIST IN ISOLATION. QTE IT IS OFTEN PROBABLY AN EXPRESSION OF WHAT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OFTEN PASS ON TO THE ARMED FORCES THAT CONSTITUTES THE SECURITY PROBLEM UNQTE.

4. ONE REPORTER, NOTING THAT CENTRAL AUTHORITY BECOMING VERY POWERFUL, ASKED IF THIS WOULD NOT IMPOSE PRECONDITIONS ON KIND OF CONSTITUTION NIGERIA WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE. YAR'ADUA ANSWERED THAT STYLE OF GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ADOPT A FEDERAL SYSTEM. ADMITTING THAT FMG QTE TAKING OVER A LOT OF THINGS UNQTE, HE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING FMG HAD TAKEN OVER FROM THE STATES WITHOUT CONSULTATION AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATES. (COMMENT: THIS IS A REMARKABLY SPECIOUS ARGUMENT. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATES, MADE UP OF MILITARY GOVERNORS, IS ENTIRELY THE CREATURE OF THE CENTRAL MILITARY AUTHORITIES. AT LEAST 13 OF 19 GOVERNORS ARE NOT NATIVES OF THE STATES THEY GOVERN; THEY ARE SIMPLY POSTED THERE BY THE CHIEF OF STAFF -- YAR'ADUA HIMSELF.)

5. ANOTHER TICKLISH QUESTION: WOULD THE MILITARY GO BACK TO BARRACKS AND ACCEPT PROPOSITION THAT IT SHOULD BE OUT OF GOVERNMENT? INTERVIEWER MADE MONITORY REFERENCE TO GHANA AS COUNTRY WHERE THIS HAD NOT WORKED. YAR'ADUA ANSWERED THAT QTE QUITE HONESTLY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY UNQTE, BUT FMG WAS DOING ITS BEST TO DEPOLITIZE ARMED FORCES.

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6. ASKED IF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM WOULD NOT BE COMPLICATED BY CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE RIGHTS OF THE TRADITIONAL RULERS AND THE COMMON MEN, YAR'ADUA RESPONDED THAT FMG NOW HAS ANSWERS TO THESE THINGS, AGREED ON BOTH BY NATURAL RULES AND PRACTICING LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEOPLE.

7. ON DEMOBILIZATION, YAR'ADUA EXPLAINED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OUTRIGHT DEMOBILIZATION IN THE POPULAR SENSE. SOLDIERS WISHING TO

LEAVE ARMY COULD OPT FOR TRANSFER EITHER TO ANOTHER SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY OR TO OTHER UNIFORMED SERVICES. YAR'ADUA SAID EFFORT TO INCULCATE SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY OF CIVIL SERVICE WOULD CONTINUE, BUT THAT PURGE ON SCALE OF 1975 EXERCISE WAS NOT LIKELY.

8. YAR'ADUA SAW FMG FOREIGN POLICY CONCENTRATING ON AFRICA. OTHER AFRICANS, HE FELT, WERE AWARE NIGERIA QTE NOT TRYING TO ENFORCE ANYTHING ON THEM UNQTE.

9. ASKED ABOUT ENTEBBE RAID AND HOW NIGERIA WOULD REACT TO SUCH AN ATTACK, YAR'ADUA REPLIED QTE WE WILL MAKE DAMN CERTAIN THAT THEY CAN'T DO IT UNQTE.

10. IN CASE OF WAR BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES, FMG WOULD QTE DO ANYTHING IN OUR POWER AND I MEAN ANYTHING UNQTE TO HELP OPPRESSED AFRICANS, ESPECIALLY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

11. COMMENT: APPEARANCE OF YAR'ADUA AS SPEAKER TO THE NATION ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF JULY 29 COUP WOULD APPEAR TO BE MEANINGFUL MOVE IN ESTABLISHING IMAGE AS LEADER OF THE PEOPLE. THIS FEELING REINFORCED BY ABSENCE OF ANY PRINTED OR SPOKEN PRONOUNCEMENTS BY HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO ON EITHER JULY 29 OR 30. DAILY TIMES PRINTED FULL TEXT OF INTERVIEW WHILE NEW NIGERIAN HAD FOUR SEPARATE HEADLINE ARTICLES ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF YAR'ADUA STATEMENTS. BEHAVIOR OF NIGERIAN BROADCASTING COMPANY IN ALERTING A FEW FOREIGN EMBASSY ONLY HOURS BEFORE INTERVIEW MIGHT FURTHER SUGGEST DISAGREEMENT OVER WHO SPEAKER WOULD BE. ON OTHER HAND, FEATURING OF YAR'ADUA COULD BE ATTEMPT TO REINFORCE CONCEPT OF UNITED TEAM LEADERSHIP (I.E., OBASANJO HAD HIS OPPORTUNITY WITH JUNE 29 ADDRESS, NOW LET YAR'ADUA HAVE LIMELIGHT). ANOTHER ELEMENT IS OBASANJO'S RELATIVELY POOR TELEVISION PRESENCE, A PROBLEM HE IS REPORTEDLY TREATING WITH SPEECH LESSONS. DESPITE LATTER TWO POINTS, WE FEEL INTERVIEW CONFIDENTIAL

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INDICATES YAR'ADUA'S CONTINUING MOVE TO THE FORE, A DIRECTION PARALLELED BEHIND THE SCENES WITH AN INCREASINGLY STRONG POSITION ON SMC.
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